

Bay Area OLOC

Old Lesbians Organizing for Change



Newsletter – April, 2025

This group of old dykes is about empowerment and visibility, moving into the next phase of our lives with panache and activism, talking about difficult topics including our inevitable deaths, long-term planning, community and connection. Open to old lesbians 60 and over.

Come to Bay Area OLOC's Spring Retreat! **Friday May 2– Sunday May 4, 2025** **3 Days & 2 Nights in the Napa Woodlands**

Old lesbians, their partners, and caregivers are all warmly invited to Bay Area OLOC's spring retreat. We are fortunate to be gathering at Enchanted Hills Camp again, owned and operated by the Lighthouse for the Blind, a site we've enjoyed several times. The lovely wooded setting is ideal for a restful getaway. There are a variety of sleeping accommodations, a central building for group discussions, and a new dining hall accessed by shuttle vehicles. We meet, play games, schmooze, take walks, and swim (suits optional!) in a large heated pool. All facilities are wheelchair accessible. Typically 30 or more Lesbians 60 and over attend. OLOC takes over the whole camp, *it's just us!* (Plus the helpful staff.)

The sliding scale registration means that all who wish to attend are welcome. It covers lodging including linens for Friday and Saturday nights, and six meals. Arrival begins Friday at 2:00 pm. The pool will be open from 3:00 – 5:00; dinner will be served at 5:30. Friday evening is informal with crafts (bring supplies of any kind!) and a variety of games.



Structured activities kick off Saturday morning at 10:00 after breakfast with our traditional check-in circle. **“How are you? What is going on in your life now?”**

After lunch, Ruth Mahaney will share reflections on the situation Lesbians are confronting in today's political environment. **“We've been under attack before!”** Ruth will remind us how we've fought to win our rights, organized in perilous times, and drawn strength from relationships and chosen families. Ruth has been a perennial activist and a professor of

women's studies and gay and lesbian history at Sonoma State and San Francisco Community College. After Ruth's talk, we'll break into small discussion groups to share the personal impact of the election and all that has gone on, as well as how we are finding strength and resisting during such trying times. At the end, we'll reconvene to share insights and reflections before heading off to rest or swim before dinner.

Saturday evening is our Salon, an opportunity to share music, spoken word, art, skits, WHATEVER! ***Bring your writing, paintings, and musical instruments!*** After the Salon we can play games, have a sing-along, put on dance music and/or hang out with snacks.

After Sunday breakfast, the Bay Area OLOC Organizing Committee will report on how we keep the organization running and ask for your ideas on future events and activities. This membership meeting is a great opportunity for input. We'll hear from a member of the national OLOC Steering Committee (see information below) about the national gathering in Columbus Ohio this August). We're also planning a bit of entertainment! After lunch, the pool will be open; we'll have free time and adjourn by 3:30 pm.



Throughout the weekend participants are welcome to initiate small group discussions during free time. Groups can self-organize to hike, or discuss topics such as caregiving, creativity, bereavement, or politics.

COST: We ask everyone to pay what is comfortable on a sliding scale of \$0 to \$275 for the full weekend. BA OLOC's cost is \$264 per person. BA OLOC covers EVERYONE'S registration on a sliding fee scale thanks to generous donations and bequests in the past.

LOCATION: Enchanted Hills Camp is outside Napa. Driving time is about 90 minutes from San Francisco and 75 minutes from Berkeley. *If you can provide a ride, or if you need a ride, please note that on your registration form.*

FOOD: All meals will be provided by the Camp starting with Friday supper through Sunday lunch. There will be vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free options at all meals. Women with other food concerns are welcome to bring items they will need, to supplement what is offered. We will have the use of a refrigerator and microwave.

POOL: The pool will be open Friday 3:00 - 5:00, Saturday 3:45 - 5:30 and Sunday 1:00 -3:00 pm. Swimsuits are optional. We will not have a lifeguard on duty but a member with CPR training will be present. The pool is located down a short hill - we will have transport available to and from the pool. There is a built-in pool lift. Everyone who wishes to will able to enjoy the pool!

If you plan to come, see “More information for Retreat Participants” and complete the Retreat Registration at the end of this Newsletter. HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

OUR VALENTINES DANCE BROUGHT OUT OVER 100 WOMEN!

By Ginny Garrett

WoW !!!



Marion Abdullah enjoys the Jessie Ortiz

& Friends Band / Photo © Sandy Morris

Everybody’s been raving about our Valentine Tea Dance and the great band, Jesse Ortiz and Friends. Jesse gathered an amazing group of musicians and the beat was infectious all afternoon. We were again at the Berkeley Unitarian Fellowship Hall, a comfy place, very accessible, with a nice hardwood dance floor. After holding several events there, we know our way around.

We’re even able to use their bowls and cups for our goodies. The Organizing Committee embellished the space with HEART-felt decorations, and provided a nice variety of snacks and drinks. Several attendees brought snacks too. Women came from all around the Bay Area, Sonoma County, and even Sacramento. Shouts of recognition rang out often, as old friends reconnected. We estimate that over 100 women danced the afternoon away, so we could all get home before dark.

Given the success of the dance, by popular demand, the Organizing Committee is planning an Autumn Tea Dance on **Saturday, October 25th**. Do it now—mark your calendars!

Dorothy “Dottie” Baker Named a “Living Legend”

By Laura Tow

A number of Bay Area OLOC members were present to celebrate our friend Dottie Baker (1931) as she was presented with a “Living Legend” award by the Military Women's Memorial in February. This organization, based in Washington DC, honors trail-blazing patriot women. The Memorial recognizes awardees who “are still with us to be appreciated!” Dottie’s military career was extraordinary. She enlisted in the Armed Forces in 1949 at 18 and served over 40 years before retiring in 1991 at age 60. Dottie was the first female in the U.S. Air Force to achieve the rank of Chief Master Sergeant.

The room was full of friends, family and invited guests, listening intently to the Memorial’s presentation, to Dottie's personal stories of career highlights, and to her responses to audience questions. Dottie was stationed in a variety of locations during her career, including spending two years (1951-1953) in Yokohama, Japan as a personal effects records clerk. While there, she was able to explore the country and become fluent in Japanese. Later appointments included Administrative Specialist, Administrative Supervisor and Administrative Superintendent. In 1972 she cross-trained into Aircraft Maintenance and became Superintendent of Maintenance.



There were times in Dottie’s service when she supervised as many as 500 troops. She was also a Career Advisor, counseling airmen who were having difficulties or were unsure what path to take within the military system. At one point she was offered a promotion to commissioned officer but declined it, believing she could help younger people best by remaining an enlisted person just like them, only at a higher rank.

During the question and answer portion of the program, Dottie was asked if she had experienced any interpersonal difficulties as a female or a person of color. She acknowledged that there were times in her career when she was one of a very few women in her unit. At one time, she said, she was the only female. “I gave respect and I got respect, I had no problems.”



An audience member asked “That promotion to Chief Master Sergeant, you broke records, how did it make you feel?” Her response: “Actually when I made Chief, it seemed like I was just making another rank, until one of the base newspapers came out and said, ‘You’re the first female chief’ and it kind of dawned on me a bit. But then I said, ‘I can’t act like I’m the first, yet I feel like I should.’ It was a pleasure but I wasn’t thrown into it, I just gradually lived up to it and had the respect of everyone there on base. I guess when people start respecting you, you know you’ve done something right. So I just kept moving on.”

Another attendee asked, “Would you recommend the Military today as a career for a young woman?” Dottie replied without hesitation: “Yes I would. It's a growing experience. It was with me, I was 18 when I went in. It really helped me a lot. It helped me to get along with people; it helped me to understand everybody, all the different people I encountered.”

After retirement Dottie spent 30 years as a tour guide and eventual President of the Lafayette Senior Recreation Center. She continues to lead an active life, gardening daily, having many social connections, being grateful for good health and for all of her life adventures!

Sign Up with National OLOC

**OLOC's National Gathering is coming up this August, 20th – 24th, 2025
Embassy Suites, Columbus Ohio**

Registration is open for the Gathering this year! Old Lesbians from all over the country, and a few from around the world, will gather in Columbus Ohio this coming August for our biennial convocation.

The theme this year is ***PREVAILING: Old Lesbians United for Our Future***. On Wednesday, August 20th there will be groups for Lesbians of Color and White Lesbians to continue OLOC's process of overcoming White dominance. The organizers are thrilled to announce that the keynote speaker will be Washington State Supreme Court Justice G. Helen Whitener. Justice Whitener was appointed to the Court in 2020 and subsequently elected by voters twice to retain her position. Before becoming a judge, she was a prosecutor and defense attorney for 14 years.

Women who have attended a national gathering report it as being a wonderful new experience. If you have participated in one, you may remember the excitement of seeing old friends and making new contacts. National OLOC and Bay Area OLOC collaborate so Old Lesbians have sources of support to attend. Be sure to affiliate with National OLOC so you receive updates. In coming months, there will be a call for women who would like to present a workshop to pitch their topics. There is also always time at the Gathering for Lesbians who share a common interest or concern to meet. Stay tuned and mark your calendar.

National OLOC Lets You Access More Old Lesbian Resources!

National OLOC offers a wonderful assortment of support groups, Zoom events, and other resources. Joining is easy, and dues are on an ability-to-pay basis. Members of national OLOC are termed "affiliates," and you have to be connected as an affiliate to receive notices and links to their events. The website to gain access to all this is www.OLOC.org

Upcoming Bay Area OLOC Activities:

OLOC is a community partner of QWOCCMAP for their Annual Film Festival San Francisco - June 13 – 15, 2025

Bay Area OLOC volunteers and donates as a community partner of the Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project's annual free film festival. QWOCCMAP has offered free film-making workshops to queer women of color for over 20 years. Wonderful short films produced by queer women of color will be shown at each of the screenings.

Old Lesbian Picnic – Sunday, July 20th, 2025

Live Oak Park, Berkeley, 12:00 to 4:00 pm

Bay Area OLOC will hold our annual picnic again at the site outside the Berkeley Art Center. The event is a pot luck and a great way to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones. Paratransit service is available. We don't barbeque, so there's no smoke to contend with.

Bay Area OLOC Fall Retreat at Enchanted Hills

September 12th – 14th, 2025

Autumn Tea Dance, Berkeley

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Bay Area OLOC's Organizing Committee:

A small Organizing Committee meets monthly on Zoom to keep Bay Area OLOC running. Members include: Pat Cull, Laura Tow, Ginny Garrett, Jeannine Toussaint, Tara Sterling, Jan Herzog, Susan Chacin, and Michiko Bailey Thorne

Newsletter:

Photos in the Dottie Baker article were contributed by Dottie and Laura Tow, the dance picture by Sandy Morris, other photos by the editor, Susan Chacin.

You are invited to send articles, poems, and other items for the newsletter to: susanchnew@gmail.com . (Please put OLOC NEWSLETTER in the subject line.) The newsletter and an occasional Bulletin come out periodically to announce upcoming events.

Most women on our mailing list receive the newsletter by email. A number have asked to also receive it by "snail mail." If you are getting the newsletter in the mail and don't need a paper copy, let Pat Cull know. If you don't get it by mail but would like a paper copy, let Pat know that too. If we have your email, you'll get the newsletter by email unless you tell us otherwise. Contact Pat at: patcull70@gmail.com

More Information for Retreat Participants

To register for the retreat, fill out the form that appears on the last page of this newsletter. **The DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF REGISTRATION by mail is no later than Tuesday April 15, 2025**. This is a firm deadline, needed to plan food, staffing and lodging details. We would appreciate receiving your registration as soon as you can send it in! We cannot accept telephone or email registrations, and ask that you send a check in with the registration. **If necessary, the check can be post-dated.**

If you plan to come to the retreat, please read the following information carefully and keep it handy for reference as you pack! Registrants will also receive an email with last-minute information.

Several OLOC members deal with chemical sensitivity. PLEASE DO NOT USE SCENTED PRODUCTS BEFORE COMING OR AT THE RETREAT! This includes hair products, deodorant, and fabric softeners. It is awkward to have to address this issue in person, however women's health is at risk when someone attends wearing or bringing scented items. Thank you for your assistance.

GETTING THERE: Enchanted Hills Camp's address is 3410 Mt Veeder Rd, Napa, CA 94558. You can find directions on Google Maps. The route from the East Bay takes Hwy 80 east to exit 33 for CA 37 west toward Napa. Turn right at exit 19 for CA 29 (Sonoma Blvd) toward Napa. Take exit 18-A toward 1st Street. At the traffic circle, take the 3rd exit onto 1st Street which becomes Browns Valley Rd, then it becomes Partrick Rd. Turn right onto Browns Valley Rd, then turn left onto Redwood Rd. and continue onto Mt. Veeder Rd. The camp is on your right.

ARRIVAL & LOGISTICS: At our last retreat, there were several changes and improvements compared with previous years. The parking area and an unloading zone are clearly marked. Start at the welcome building, where you'll get a map of the camp, a name tag, handouts, and baggage tags. All rooms will have been preassigned to the best of our ability, reflecting information from your registration form. Staff will deliver you and your baggage to your sleeping area. Linens will already be in each room.

BRING: Writing, artwork, music, or whatever you would like to share at the Salon on Saturday evening. Also bring games, musical instruments, dance music, ideas for discussions or activities, etc. **ALSO** bring soap, flashlight, sunscreen, bug spray and something warm to wear for cool evenings. If you have clothes, books, jewelry, or posters that you would like to give away, you may bring them, but **please commit to taking home anything that is left at the end of the retreat.**

Information for Retreat Participants, continued

COVID: Masks are optional. We recommend taking a home test prior to coming. **Please test if you feel unwell** and do not come if you test positive. (Your registration fee will be fully refunded.)

PLEASE provide an OFF-SITE emergency contact on your registration.

PHONES: In an emergency, the camp phone is (415) 526-7111. Cell phones mostly work at camp, but you may need to ask where to find the best reception.

SMOKING is only allowed in one designated area. Fire danger is high, and others' health and welfare is a concern. This policy will be strictly enforced and applies to cannabis as well as tobacco. We request that cannabis vaping be done privately for the comfort of all.

Enchanted Hills is peanut free. The camp serves a wide range of people including many children. Please take this seriously, do not bring granola or candy with peanuts, crackers containing peanut butter, etc. A few crumbs left in your room could sicken the next occupant.

GENERAL RETREAT & TRANSPORTATION QUESTIONS: Contact **Ginny Garrett at 510-495-4285** or email her at ginnygarrett@hotmail.com.

BAY AREA OLOC
May 2 – 4, 2025 RETREAT REGISTRATION

PLEASE PRINT OUT THIS FORM AND COMPLETE IT, OR WRITE ALL THE INFORMATION ON A SHEET OF PAPER, AND MAIL WITH YOUR CHECK TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

Please print clearly.

The deadline for receipt of your registration is Friday, April 15, 2024

(We appreciate receiving registrations earlier.) WE CANNOT TAKE TELEPHONE OR E-MAILED RESERVATIONS. Thank you!

NAME _____ **PHONE(S)** _____

ADDRESS _____ **CITY** _____ **ZIP** _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, MY OFF-SITE CONTACT PERSON IS:

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____ **Relation:** _____

FEE: Sliding fee scale is \$0-\$275 for Friday through Sunday.
(Our cost is \$264 / person - please pay what you can.)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____ Make check payable to “Bay Area OLOC”
Please note if you are post-dating your check.

REFUNDS: Your registration will be refunded in full if you are unable to attend

RIDES: I need a ride I can offer a ride to ___ women

BEDROOMS: Do you have medical or physical disability requirements for sleeping accommodations? Please describe: _____
Is someone else attending whom you would like to room with? (Make sure she registers!!)

Please plan to be fragrance-free all weekend, thank you!

DO YOU NEED A RAISED TOILET SEAT? Yes

FOOD RESTRICTIONS: Vegetarian Gluten-free Vegan

MAIL REGISTRATION FORMS to:
Laura Tow, 881 Coachman Place, Clayton, CA 94517

Registration questions? Call/text (925)-980-3842 or email msslaura@earthlink.net